



U.S. Department of Justice

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For Immediate Release:

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EVENT: Sentencing

Defendant: Michael Richardson

TAYLOR MAN SENTENCED FOR HATE CRIME

A Taylor, Michigan man was sentenced to 96 months in prison today as a result of his pleading guilty to violating the civil rights of an African-American family by attempting to burn down the family's house as well as obstructing justice, announced United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy.

Mr. Murphy was joined in the announcement by Special Agent in Charge Andrew G. Arena, Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Michael Richardson, age 35, was sentenced by United States District Judge George Caram Steeh in federal court in Detroit.

United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy said, "The idea that an American family could be driven from its home because of an arson fostered by racial hatred is a chilling throwback to an era of discrimination that rightfully belongs on the ash-heap of history – and not in our present day neighborhoods. The right of each person to live where he or she wants, in peace,

without being subjected to racial harassment and hate-motivated violence, is one that civilized society must always preserve. Today's sentence should stand as a deterrent against any who would attempt to intimidate, threaten or harm another person by interfering with these civil rights."

Richardson's co-defendant Wayland Mullins, age 38, was sentenced in August, 2007 to 17 years in prison as a result of him being found guilty by a jury of conspiring to violate the family's housing rights, conspiring to obstruct a federal investigation, and using fire in the commission of a felony. Mullins was also ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$12,400.

The evidence at trial established that on July 28, 2002, Mullins and several of his neighbors gathered together and discussed burning down the home of an African-American family that had recently moved into the neighborhood. Following this conversation, Mullins broke a window in the family's home, poured in a flammable substance, and lit the substance on fire while Michael Richardson, acted as a lookout. After the fire, Mullins and Richardson attempted to obstruct a federal investigation into the arson by lying to federal investigators about their knowledge of the crime. The jury found that Mullins' actions were racially-motivated.

A third defendant, Rick Cotton, also participated in the discussion before the fire and in the cover-up afterward, and was convicted by a jury for lying to federal investigators and a federal grand jury and for obstructing justice. Cotton also pleaded guilty to conspiring with Mullins, Richardson and others to violate the family's housing rights.

Ricky Cotton was sentenced in April, 2007 to 78 months in prison.